NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

FENCE

(Feet)
CODE 382

DEFINITION

A constructed barrier to livestock, wildlife or people.

PURPOSES

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to facilitate the application of conservation practices that treat the soil, water, air, plant animal and human resource concerns.

CONDITIONS WHERE THIS PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice may be applied on any area where livestock and/or wildlife control is needed, or where public access needs to be regulated. Fences are not needed where natural barriers will serve the purpose.

CRITERIA

Fencing materials shall be of a high quality and durability, and the construction performed to meet the intended management objectives.

Fences shall be positioned to facilitate management requirements.

Standard or conventional (barbed or smooth wire), suspension, woven wire, or electric fences shall consist of acceptable fencing designs to control the animal(s) or people of concern and meet the intended life of the practice.

Height, number, and spacing of wires will be installed to facilitate control and management of the animal(s) and people of concern.

Height, size, spacing and type of posts will be used that best provides the needs for the style of fence required and is best suited for the topography of the landscape.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider installing fences in locations that will facilitate maintenance, avoiding irregular terrain and/or water crossings where other options are available.

Consider wildlife movement needs when locating fences. Temporary flagging can help alert deer to new fence locations.

Consider livestock management, handling, watering and feeding when locating fences.

Where applicable, clear right-of-ways will be established which will facilitate fence construction and maintenance.

Consider soil erosion potential when planning and constructing a fence on steep slopes.

Landowners are to be encouraged to fence livestock away from streambanks in high use areas or in continuously grazed pastures. Where crossings are necessary, recommend a protected animal crossing with “break away” fence sections across streams where high water, ice, and or debris may break fence.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications are to be prepared for specific field sites based on the NRCS National and Massachusetts Standards, Massachusetts Specification Guidelines, and appropriate state or local statutes or laws.

Fence may be designed and installed to meet the manufacturers specifications, or the specifications provided in NRCS Massachusetts Specification Guidelines for Fence.

Specifications shall be recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

NRCS, MA
July, 1999

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Regular inspection of fences should be part of an on-going management program. Inspection of fences after storm events is needed to facilitate the function of the intended use of the fence.

Maintenance and repairs will be performed promptly, as needed, to facilitate the intended operation of the installed fence.

Specified line wire tension and spacing must be maintained. Tension adjustments on high tensile fence should be made during fence repairs, and for extreme seasonal temperature changes in early summer and late fall.

For electric fence, vegetative growth beneath and around the fence should be controlled mechanically by grazing or mowing, or as a last resort, chemically. An electrical charge on the fence must be maintained at all times. Fence voltage should be checked weekly with a fence tester, and immediately after lightning storms and deep snows. Any vegetation in contact with the fence can cause decreased voltage due to grounding.

Woody plant growth can distort wire spacing and cause structural damage to all types of wire fence.

FINAL DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED

The completed work is to be checked and documented to verify that the practice is complete according to NRCS standards and specifications. Supporting data for documentation includes those features of this practice that can be measured and observed, such as:

1. Length of fence installed;
2. Type of fence and other materials installed; and
3. Signature of the performance checker.

REFERENCES

Selders, Arthur W. 1987. *High-Tensile Wire Fencing.* Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service, Ithaca, NY.

Turner, J. Howard. 1980. *Planning Fences.* American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials. Engineering Center, Athens, GA.

Turner, J. Howard, Ed.. 1974. *Building Fences.* American Association for Vocational Instructional Materials. Engineering Center, Athens, GA.